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PLUS:

Index to 1988 Issues of *Focus* and *Political TrendLetter*

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

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Bush's Chance With Blacks

As 1988 came to a close, President-elect George Bush was thinking seriously about putting two blacks in his cabinet. Should this come to pass, his administration would be the first to boast two black cabinet members.

The chances seem fairly good that Mr. Bush will come through. In fact, he has already nominated Dr. Louis Sullivan, president of the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, to be Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. And while retired Lt. Gen. Julius Becton failed to get the nod to head the new Department of Veterans Affairs, as was expected, another black nomination may come down the pike early in 1989 to fill the new cabinet-level drug czar position.

Since Bush won only 12 percent of the black vote, even a single black cabinet appointment would raise his standing among blacks across the nation. But *two*? The very idea has sparked intense curiosity: What does George Bush *really* want from black Americans? That may be a cynical question, of course, but not an irrelevant one.

Perhaps the president-elect wants to relegate his racially divisive campaign to the past and to banish forever the spectre of Willie Horton. Perhaps he wants to dramatize his pursuit of a "kinder, gentler nation." A third possibility is that Bush wants to soften the blow of major budget cuts in social programs, which are expected early in his administration.

The most plausible explanation, however, might be found in Bush's search for future political support among black voters. Like Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and former Republican National Committee chairman Bill Brock, Bush has advocated that the Republican party aggressively recruit blacks into its ranks. For the first time, he has a chance to do more than advocate.

If Bush is indeed serious about breaking the Democratic party's hammer lock on the black vote, he couldn't have picked a better moment. The confidence blacks place in the Democratic party is at an all-time low. Many blacks suspect party bigwigs of circulating the notion that black influence in the party is driving whites out.

Here are a couple of other factors that could strengthen Mr. Bush's hand. He is expected to give Fred McClure, a black vice president at Texas Air Corporation, the high-profile and influential position of assistant to the President for congressional relations. And, in nominating former New York congressman Jack Kemp to be Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Bush gains a cabinet officer who has close ties to some black leaders, who strongly believes that the GOP must recruit more blacks, and who is expected to name blacks to key subcabinet positions in his agency. Kemp will replace Samuel Pierce, the black HUD Secretary whom few blacks got to know and whom President Reagan once mistook for a mayor.

Clearly, the new President is in a position to score some public relations victories among blacks, and he will certainly win higher approval ratings from blacks than did Ronald Reagan. But getting blacks to change their partisanship will not be easy. Before that can happen, blacks must be convinced that the GOP seriously wants to make room for them. A 1987 national survey conducted by the Joint Center and the Gallup Organization showed just how difficult this task is likely to be: only 17 percent of all blacks surveyed thought the Republican party cared about their problems.

These data suggest that the Republican party has an enormous image problem in the black community. However, Bush's appointment of blacks to his administration and his use of his office to achieve a "kinder, gentler nation" could begin to solve that problem. ■

Eddie N. Williams

PRESIDENT

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The 1988 Election in Review

November Vote Showed Blacks Continue to Reject the GOP While Remaining an Uneasy Partner in the Democratic Coalition

by Dr. Linda F. Williams

On the night of the 1986 midterm election, Senator Joseph Biden (D-Del.) concluded that the Democrats could not win the presidency in 1988 "unless they can maintain the multiracial coalition" which was at that moment enabling the party to recapture the U.S. Senate. Such a coalition, however, is precisely what did *not* happen last November 8. While nearly nine out of every 10 blacks voted for Michael Dukakis, almost six out of every 10 whites voted for George Bush.

Many pundits have concluded that racial polarization was key to Bush's victory just as it was to a whole string of prior Republican wins. This conclusion is a tempting one since, apart from Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory in 1964, one has to go back to 1944 to find a presidential election in which the Democrats captured more than 50 percent of the white vote. Indeed, the Democrats have lost five of the last six presidential elections and seven of the last 10.

During the last two presidential elections, the Democratic party has attempted to hold on to black voters, its most loyal constituency, while downplaying black influence in the party in hopes of stemming the flight of white voters. This situation has posed a dilemma for blacks: should they remain loyal to a party that has shown reluctance to embrace them as full partners? Or, alternatively, should they try to increase their numbers in the GOP even though, since the 1960s, the Republican party has been generally hostile to the interests of blacks, particularly during Ronald Reagan's two terms as president? As the Republicans contemplate their victory and the Democrats their defeat, the black vote may figure prominently in the plans of both parties as they assess the future viability of their coalitions.

Blacks: Not an Isolated Voting Bloc

Perhaps too much has been made of the idea that blacks have isolated themselves by their overwhelming support for the Democrats. According to CBS/*New York Times* exit polls, Dukakis won a slightly lower percentage of the black vote (86 percent) than Walter Mondale won in 1984 (89 percent). Conversely, 12 percent of blacks reported voting for George Bush—roughly three percentage points more than those who had reported voting for President Reagan in 1984.

Moreover, blacks were not unlike other groups in the society in their views on issues and their attitudes toward the Reagan administration. A CBS poll showed that preferences concerning major issues mattered little in voting decisions. For example, blacks were just as likely as whites to favor punishing criminals and to oppose raising taxes.

And Dukakis, after all, did not win 46 percent of the popular vote solely through black support. Along with blacks and some white Democratic regulars, two other minority groups strongly backed Dukakis: Hispanics and Jews (who voted for Dukakis by 69 and 64 percent respectively). Blacks who supported Dukakis were strong in their criticism of the Reagan administration. But they were not unique in their criticism. In the same poll, a substantial proportion of Hispanics and Jews described their vote as "a vote to change Reagan's policies."

Education and economics divided the electorate almost as much as race. CBS/*New York Times* exit polls showed that Dukakis won the majority of the vote of all those who had not graduated from high school as well as those who earned less than $25,000 in household income.

Finally, the idea that the black electorate is becoming more isolated is contradicted by the fact that in 1988 more whites voted for the presidential candidate supported by blacks than in any election since Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign. In 1980, 36 percent of whites voted for Carter, and in 1984 only 34 percent voted for Walter Mondale, but in 1988, 40 percent of whites voted for Dukakis. Thus, although racial polarization persists, those who argue that it worsened in 1988 are mistaken.

Blacks Continue to Reject the GOP

Despite earlier predictions, the vast majority of blacks in every demographic category remained opposed to Bush's election throughout the 1988 campaign. There are several reasons why the GOP was unable to garner more black votes. One is that Bush inherited from the Reagan administration and the Republican party a legacy of hostility toward black Americans. This was exemplified by Reagan's drastic cuts in federal funding for human development programs and his attempts to dilute civil rights laws and weaken their enforcement. Bush's own actions as vice president, such as his concurrence with Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988, did little to reassure blacks.

(Continued on page 8)

Dr. Williams is associate director of research at the Joint Center.

A Child Care Agenda for the 1990s

Congress Will Consider Legislation to Provide Safe, Affordable Care to Children of Working Parents

by Marian Wright Edelman

Every day more than two million American children between the ages of five and 13 come home from school to empty dwellings. In addition, the names of countless preschool children of working parents are on waiting lists of child care centers that cannot begin to respond to the demand.

The enormous nationwide need for child care reflects fundamental economic and demographic changes in our society that require increasing numbers of mothers to financially support or help support their families. These trends are abundantly evident in the black community. Almost two-thirds of all black mothers of preschool children hold jobs, and more than half of the preschool-age children in black two-parent families have both parents in the labor force.

The inadequate supply of child care facilities, however, is only one element of this nation's three-pronged child care crisis. The other two elements are cost and quality of care. It generally costs about $3,000 a year to keep one child in day care. At that price, care for two children is well beyond the means of families whose gross annual income is $9,000, which is about the median income of black families headed by single mothers.

The result is a two-tier child care system. More affluent families have the resources to send their children to day care and preschool programs that are safe and can provide a good foundation for future learning. But poor and minority children, who generally have the greatest need for child care that promotes learning skills, may be receiving care that is not even safe let alone educationally stimulating. Thus one portion of America's childhood population is enriched by day care programs while another receives services of varying quality.

How to respond, however, has been debated from churches and neighborhoods to the halls of Congress. The current system is not providing enough adequate day care services to meet the nation's needs. But a coalition of children's advocates will be pushing the 101st Congress to pass the Act for Better Child Care (ABC) as a means of addressing this growing problem. ABC, which was first introduced during the last Congress, is designed to make safe, low-cost, high-quality child care available to more families.

However, because each state has its own standards, day care is administered unevenly across the country. We know, for example, that very young children need individual attention to develop normally. Yet 30 states, including South Carolina, Arizona, and Florida, do not regulate the group size of preschool facilities. And 11 states allow an adult-child ratio in which a single adult may be responsible for 10 or more two-year-olds. In Illinois, for example, which allows a 1-to-8 adult-child ratio, a single adult was found to be caring for 47 youngsters in the basement of a center in Waukegan. The parents who put their children into that situation could afford no better; at $25 a week, the program cost one-third what most child care in that area cost. Along with group size, the training, skill, and attitude of child care staff are crucial to the quality of care. Nevertheless, seven states allow totally untrained persons to staff day care centers. ABC would require all regulated child care providers to complete a minimum of 15 hours of in-service training annually.

A Growing National Need

If we do not move now to improve our current child care system and add new resources, we will be missing an irreplaceable opportunity to prepare children for better futures. Among today's children, one in four is poor, one in seven is at risk of dropping out of school, and one in five is at risk of becoming a teen parent. Yet we already know that preschool education helps break the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and early parenthood. Former preschool students are more likely than other low-income children to complete high school and be self-supporting.

According to a 1988 staff report of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, every dollar invested in preschool education results in a savings of $6.00 that will not need to be spent further down the road in remedial education, higher welfare costs, and low worker productivity.

Reliable day care helps poor families become more self-sufficient as well. For example, a child care assistance program in Massachusetts which is part of the Education and Training (ET) program in that state, designed to help low-income mothers get off welfare, helped about half of

Ms. Edelman is the president of the Washington-based Children's Defense Fund.

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Inside This Issue

- **Donald Payne is elected New Jersey's first black congressman; but all other non-incumbent blacks lose in their congressional races.**
- **Rep. William H. Gray becomes the fourth highest ranking House Democrat.**
- **House Judiciary panel considers a civil rights agenda for the 1990s.**

George Bush and a "Testy" Congress

Despite Vice President **GEORGE BUSH'S** convincing victory over Massachusetts Governor **MICHAEL DUKAKIS,** the November election ironically may have been a confirmation that the conservative hold on Congress has ended. As Bush moves into the White House this January, he cannot claim a mandate to continue President **RONALD REAGAN'S** conservative programs. In fact, since the election, Bush has distanced himself from the negative tenor and racial overtones of his campaign and embraced the theme of a "kinder, gentler nation." He will certainly need to bring a conciliatory olive branch to the 101st Congress which will be firmly controlled by the Democrats.

As the Bush administration grapples with the federal deficit and with pressing national problems in defense spending, health care, and foreign policy, it will have to deal with a Congress that has grown stronger and more assertive since the Democrats regained control of the Senate in 1986. Bush's victory, says Rep. **WILLIAM H. GRAY** (D-Pa.), involved "no landslide, no coattails and no agenda. He'll find a testy Congress which won't provide him with a long honeymoon."

Bush won't be able to dominate Congress as Reagan did in the beginning of his administration when he pushed through his budget which slashed social programs. Even among Republicans in Congress, Bush has gained little political leverage since he failed to carry on his coatails any additional GOP candidates to Capitol Hill. Nor does Bush have President Reagan's personal popularity which allowed him to go over the heads of House and Senate members and appeal directly to their constituents.

The 101st will also be a Congress where blacks continue to be a force in the House leadership. With his election to the chairmanship of the House Democratic Caucus, Gray has attained the fourth highest position in the House Democratic pecking order (see below). And black congressmen will retain chairs of six House committees and may gain the chairmanship of yet another. These committee chairmanships include: Education and Labor, **AUGUSTUS HAWKINS** (D-Calif.); District of Columbia, **RONALD DELLUMS (D-Calif.);** Standards of Official Conduct, **JULIAN DIXON** (D-Calif.); Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, **LOUIS STOKES** (D-Ohio); Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, **CHARLES B. RANGEL** (D-N.Y.); and Select Committee on Hunger, **MICKEY LELAND** (D-Tex.). And Detroit congressman **JOHN CONYERS** should move up in seniority to head Government Operations as **JACK BROOKS** (D-Tex.) vacates the chairmanship of that Committee to assume the leadership of the Judiciary Committee from retiring Representative **PETER RODINO** (D-N.J.).

As in the past, black voters overwhelmingly backed Democrats for congressional seats nationwide.

Black voters helped add to the ranks of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) by supporting Newark's black city councilman **DONALD PAYNE**, now New Jersey's first black congressman. They also contributed to Democratic victories in senate races in New Jersey and Texas and provided the margin of victory in numerous other House races. **Most black voters rejected the opportunity to support black Republican candidates (two for the Senate and two for the House), all of whom ran on conservative issues.** A look at congressional races joined by black candidates follows.

Espy Trounces Opponent in Mississippi. The only incumbent member of the CBC who faced a serious challenge was black Mississippi freshman **MIKE ESPY**. Although his white opponent, **JACK COLEMAN**, resorted to smear tactics, Espy nonetheless trounced the attorney and former Washington, D.C.-based trade association lobbyist by a margin of 65-to-34 percent (a third candidate received 1 percent of the vote). Espy held his base of black voters in the 2nd Congressional District, a rural, low-income, 52-percent-black district located in the Mississippi Delta, receiving 97 percent of the black vote. **But he greatly expanded his support among the district's white voters, winning 40 percent of their vote. By contrast, Espy's narrow 52-to-48 percent victory in 1986 over former Republican congressman WEBB FRANKLIN included only about 10 percent of the white vote.**

The seeds of Espy's victory this November were sown long before the congressional campaign started. After his 1986 election, Espy lost no time promoting an important local industry, one which employs thousands of black constituents: catfish farming. He lobbied congress to pass "National Catfish Day" in 1987 and has used his expanding influence in Washington to persuade the Army to buy more of the regional specialty to serve in its mess halls. Espy also sponsored legislation to help develop the seven-state Lower Mississippi Delta region.

Challenger Coleman aped George Bush's strategy of polarizing the electorate by trying to cast Espy as an "unpatriotic left wing radical." As far as many whites were concerned, however, that dog just wouldn't hunt. Many of Espy's white constituents respect his businesslike style and value his assignment to the powerful Agriculture and Budget committees.

Payne Becomes New Jersey's First Black Congressman. Espy and his CBC colleagues will be joined in January by one new member. With his election in the 10th Congressional District, which is 58 percent black, Newark city councilman Donald M. Payne ends an eight-year quest to become the first black person ever to represent New Jersey in Congress. Payne breezed past black Republican **MICHAEL WEBB**, a vocational education specialist, with 84 precent of the vote. But Payne's road to Capitol Hill had been long and strewn with obstacles. **His attempts in 1980 and 1986 to unseat incumbent Peter Rodino in the Democratic primaries failed. But Rodino's decision earlier this year to retire after four decades in Congress, coupled with Payne's win in the primary over Rev. RALPH T. GRANT, a fellow councilmember, cleared all barriers to Payne's historic victory in the overwhelmingly Democratic district.**

Williams Loses Again in Louisiana. The election results were not so gratifying for **FAYE WILLIAMS.** In a near replay of her bid for Congress two years ago, Williams failed to unseat Republican House freshman **CLYDE C. HOLLOWAY** in Louisiana's 8th Congressional District. Williams' hopes of becoming the state's first black representative to Congress since **CHARLES NASH** (who served from 1875 to 1877) were dashed this year by Holloway's 57-to-43 percent win, which topped his 51-to-49 percent victory over Williams in 1986.

Holloway received more money this year from the national Republican party than he did two years ago, when the GOP practically wrote off his chances of winning in the 85-percent-Democratic district. Over the last two years he maintained his support among white rural conservative voters and became more visible among the folks back home by opening four offices in the district (including one in predominantly black East Baton Rouge Parish).

While Williams won a large portion of the 35-percent-black congressional district, she was unable to convince enough rural and blue-collar white voters to vote for a black woman.

Black GOP Candidates Get Little Support. Issues and political philosophy took precedence over race in the four contests where black Republicans competed for congressional seats but lost. Although each of them ran against a white Democratic opponent, none received much support from the black electorate. This was certainly true in Maryland, where former Assistant Secretary of State **ALAN KEYES** failed to unseat incumbent Democratic senator **PAUL SARBANES.** Keyes was an articulate candidate who ran an aggressive campaign that drew support from the Republican National Committee. Even President Reagan appeared at a fund-raiser for him. **But the weakness of the Maryland Republican party, coupled with his own lack of political experience, was a serious handicap for Keyes. Keyes did not help his cause by associating himself with a 6 million dollar campaign to repeal, by referendum, a state law limiting the manufacture and sale of handguns. The repeal campaign was sponsored by the National Rifle Association (NRA), and Keyes and the NRA sank together in most parts of the state.**

In fact, Keyes only out-polled Sarbanes in conservative, predominantly white Frederick County in sparsely populated western Maryland. But Keyes, who lost by a margin of 38 to 62, garnered little support in the large population centers of Baltimore City (20 percent) and Prince Georges County (30 percent) where most of the state's black population is concentrated.

Meanwhile, black Republican Senate candidate **MAURICE A. DAWKINS** fared poorly in his race against popular former Democratic governor **CHARLES S. ROBB** to represent Virginia in the Senate. Dawkins, who only received 29 percent of the vote statewide, ran a hapless campaign that proved an embarrassment to the GOP.

Dawkins' campaign began amid charges that he was distorting his earlier activities in past Republican party political campaigns, that he was misrepresenting himself by using the title "doctor" (he holds neither a medical degree nor a Ph.D.), and that his claim to be a registered lobbyist on Capitol Hill was false (there is no record of his having been registered). **Robb, on the other hand, had gained the respect of many black Virginians when as governor he appointed a black to the State Supreme Court and raised the state's spending on education to $1 billion. And Robb's Senate campaign manager, Bernard Craighead, was black.**

As cofounder and former chair of the Democratic Leadership Council, a group which is made up of elected Democratic leaders primarily from the South and the West, Robb brings with him to Washington a power base that extends well beyond the Senate. Indeed, his national connections and his rapid political ascendence over the last 10 years have led some observers to believe he has ambitions for the White House.

Elsewhere, two black GOP candidates for the House failed to topple incumbents — in Ohio and Wisconsin. **HELEN BARNHILL**, a management consultant and civic leader in Milwaukee, garnered just over a third of the ballots cast in her challenge of three-term Democratic incumbent **JIM MOODY** for his 5th Congressional seat. With 36 percent of the vote, she did better than many observers had expected since the district is only 22 percent black.

In his second attempt to knock off five-term congressman TONY HALL in Ohio's 3rd District, which encompasses Dayton, Republican RON CRUTCHER got only 23 percent of the vote. Assuming that he would win most of the black vote (the district is 18 percent black), Crutcher tried to appeal to white conservatives with rallies and endorsements in the district featuring Republican Senate minority leader **ROBERT DOLE** and **OLIVER NORTH**, who has been charged with masterminding the Iran-Contra scheme. That strategy was of no avail, however, in the 82-percent-Democratic district.

Gray Makes History in House Leadership Race

Pennsylvania congressman William H. Gray broke new political ground by winning a three-way race to become the first black Democratic Caucus chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives and the first black member of Congress to win a post among the House's top leadership. (Black New York congressman Charles Rangel ran unsuccessfully for House majority whip in 1987.) By gaining the Caucus chairmanship, the number four position in the House hierarchy [top House Democratic leaders are Speaker Jim Wright (D-Tex.), Majority Leader Tom Foley (D-Wash.), Majority Whip Tony Coelho (D-Calif.), then Gray], Gray expanded his already substantial power and influence. During his early years in Congress, he put his stamp on major legislation to impose sanctions against South Africa and expand minority business development. In 1985, as a relative unknown, he surprised much of official Washington by winning election to the chairmanship of the powerful House Budget Committee. During his two terms as chairman of that committee, Gray ironed out budget compromises that earned him the reputation of a coalition builder who could work with members from both parties as well as the House and Senate leadership.

In the contest for Caucus chair Gray again demonstrated his political skill by defeating two other Democrats, MARY ROSE OAKAR (D-Ohio), a vocal advocate of pay equity and other issues of special concern to women, and MIKE SYNAR (D-Okla.), who claimed support from a broad regional and ideological spectrum of House members. Some observers predicted a tight race between Gray and Oakar because Oakar was already Caucus vice chair. But it wasn't even close. Gray polled over half of all the Democrats, beating Oakar by 66 votes. Always the dark horse in the race, Synar only received about 13 percent of the votes cast.

Gray can be expected to restore an activist approach to his new post, in contrast to the performance of his predecessor, **RICHARD GEPHARDT** (D-Mo.), who spent much of his tenure as Caucus chair running for the Democratic presidential nomination. The Caucus is the forum of the House Democratic membership, and Gray plans to expand the influence of the body by holding regional conferences and ensuring that Caucus policy positions

receive wide circulation in the media. The Caucus chairmanship is limited to two terms of two years each. While Gray will no longer direct a committee staff of 64 (his Caucus staff is only six) or preside over the development of a trillion-dollar federal budget, he sees his clout expanding, not diminishing. "Now I'm operating in a much broader universe, where I'm invovlved in developing Democratic party policy and strategy not only on budgets, but also on trade, defense, education—you name it," says Gray.

As his fortunes rise, Gray is more and more being discussed as someone who would look good on a national political ticket. But he shrugs off this talk, saying, "I'm an old ghetto basketball player—I take it one game at a time. Right now, I want to be the best Caucus chair the House has ever had. When I've finished with this position, I'll take a look at what else I might want to do."

A New Civil Rights Agenda?

In early December, Rep. **DON EDWARDS** (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Civil and Constitutional Rights Subcommittee, and Rep. **ROBERT KASTENMEIER** (D-Wisc.), also on the subcommittee, held a hearing on Capitol Hill to develop a civil rights agenda for the 1990s and beyond. The assembled panel of 13 civil rights scholars and activists explored the constitutional basis for eliminating social and economic inequities in the society found in unemployment, homelessness, and illiteracy. Edwards' belief that the nation must move to a new phase in civil rights policy was clear from his opening remarks. "The right to vote doesn't do a black or Hispanic person any good unless he or she has an eduaction, a job, and a home," he said. Edwards and others on the panel argued that the removal of civil rights barriers during the 1960s was not enough and that the time may have come to take the next step.

The focal point for the hearing was a 1986 Columbia University Law Review article by CHARLES L. BLACK JR., professor emeritus at Yale University Law School. American Civil Liberties Union legal director JOHN POWELL moderated the discussion, focusing on Black's contention that all American citizens have Constitutional rights to basic human needs such as food, shelter, education, and health care. Black states that these rights are rooted in the rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" contained in the Declaration of Independence; in the government's responsibility to "promote the general Welfare" as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution; and in the Ninth Amendment, which reads, "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."

Rutgers University law professor **ARTHUR KINOY** forcefully asserted that "the thrust of the Bill of Rights and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was to protect the fundamental human dignity of every individual." He cited some of the earliest American legal precedents to make his point that the Constitution was designed to adapt to current needs and that it was the "affirmative duty" of the people to remake society so that it is responsive to those needs.

YALE RABIN, professor of planning at the University of Virginia, added that the original drafters of the Constitution held that ownership of property was a prerequisite for the right to vote. He concluded therefore that the basic economic well being of citizens is a prerequsite for political participation. Dr. **PERCY VAUGHN,** dean of the Alabama State University Business School, demanded that the discussion move beyond legal arguments and focus on human factors, such as economic empowerment, by creating wealth in poor communities through capital formation and business development. Historical precedents were cited concerning the government's taking special action to expand the economic power of private citizens. New York City education official **JUALYNNE DODSON** noted that after World War II, the G.I. Bill provided men (mostly white) returning home from the war with the educational equipment necessary to achieve their upward mobility.

Washington attorney GERSHON RATNER took exception to Charles Black's premise and asserted that, unlike the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence is not an independent source of law. He added that "the framers of the Constitution explicitly protected life, liberty, and property in the Constitution, but not happiness. The courts won't go for it." Other panel members saw serious obstacles to "renegotiating the social contract" through the courts. "Issues are so intractable today because the courts don't want to apply social engineering to modern problems," said NAACP Legal Defense and Education attorney **THEODORE SHAW.** Most participants concurred that the kinds of changes under discussion had the best chance of coming about through congressional—not judicial—action. It was also the general consensus that a significant public education campaign, including more hearings, must precede any legislative changes.

the participants to do so. And in Kansas City, Missouri, parents who received child care assistance reported income increases averaging about $2,000 per year. What's more, the state of Colorado found that providing child care assistance to help low-income families become self-sufficient costs only about 38 percent of what it costs to pay Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Medicaid benefits to families that remain dependent.

The ABC Alternative

The Act for Better Child Care (ABC), if passed, would upgrade the standards of safety and quality of care and give poor and middle-income parents more choices as they search for affordable day care. ABC would also free single mothers to take jobs and become more self-sufficient, and would give disadvantaged youngsters better preparation for success in school. The basic provisions of ABC follow.

- **Help Parents Pay for Child Care.** Under the legislation, the federal government would allocate money for child care to the states, which would in turn reduce child care costs for eligible participants either through grants or contracts with child care providers or by offering parents direct assistance based on need through child care vouchers.
- **Improve the Quality of Child Care.** The bill would create minimum national safety standards for child care providers receiving public funds and would strengthen states' enforcement of those standards.
- **Expand Child Care Availability.** The bill would provide money to help states offer grants and low-interest loans to start up new child care programs and expand existing ones. A portion of each state's funds could be used to recruit and train new family day care providers as well as to fund plans to lower the high turnover rate among child care staff.
- **Make Parental Choice a Reality Instead of a Slogan.** The bill would provide for consumer education programs to help parents make wise choices. Resource and referral systems and hot lines would be established to give parents additional child care information. And ABC would guarantee the right of parents to make unannounced visits to child care facilities.

The bill would also promote choice by ensuring a wide variety of private and public providers, including family day care, for-profit and nonprofit providers, and programs offered by employers, schools, and churches.

Churches operate a third of all day care centers in the country, and are therefore essential to currently available services. In many rural, inner city, and poor areas, churches are the principal provider of decent child care services. Under ABC, churches receiving public funds would be allowed to continue offering child care as long as their programs were nonsectarian and did not discriminate in their child admissions policies among children receiving ABC funds.

- **ABC's Funding Mechanisms.** Each state would have the option of administering child care programs through contracts with child care providers or through vouchers issued directly to families who could then exchange them for services. This would be one of the more appropriate uses for vouchers, which are already used in existing federal assistance programs, such as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children, Food Stamps, and the recently enacted Family Support Act of 1988. In addition, more than 30 states currently use vouchers for child care as part of their own state-run child care programs. The federal Dependent Care Tax Credit, which is similar to a voucher approach, provides close to $4 billion to help families pay for child care that they choose.

It's Time for National Care and Safety Standards

In a national survey for the Children's Defense Fund last summer conducted by the Boston-based polling firm of Martilla & Kiley, Inc., 83 percent of working mothers said the federal government should establish minimum child care standards.

The idea that the federal government can help parents in this way is nothing new. For years, each branch of the military has had child care standards that apply to its base care facilities in all states. And the federal Head Start program has 165 performance standards that ensure the program's quality nationwide.

It should be noted that ABC would not interfere in any way with informal day care arrangements between neighbors or relatives. Family day care providers who wished to receive federal funds would have to meet certain requirements, but not the same ones that would apply to day care centers. ABC would require family day care to meet only minimal criteria regarding the number of children and infants served, health and safety protections, and a minimum age for care givers. These requirements should not discourage family day care providers from serving children.

It is good news that the Family Support Act of 1988 provides for child care assistance to parents receiving AFDC who are participating in education and work programs. But low-income families that do not receive AFDC benefits still need assistance. Recently, a working mother from California complained: "I am a single parent of two children, ages four and nine. . . . They are presently in a day care center, but I am months behind on my payments and have borrowed from every person I know. . . . Where can I get assistance? I do not want to quit and become another welfare dependent."

This mother and her children — and millions of Americans like them — need the Act for Better Child Care. America can no longer afford to ignore that need. ■

The Children's Defense Fund is a private nonprofit child advocacy organization that encourages preventive public and private investment in children and youth. For more information about the proposed ABC legislation, write the CDF at 122 C St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, or call 202-628-8787.

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Index to Volume 16
January to December 1988

Subject Index

	Month	Page
Black Elected Officials		
Gray Makes History in House Leadership Race	Nov.-Dec.	TL 3
Number of Black Elected Officials: Good and Bad News	Sept.	TL 1
A Salute to the CBC	Sept.	3
A Smoking Gun in the BEO Harassment Issue	Jan.	TL 3
The Black Family		
The Changing Black Family: Implications for Children	May	5
No Income Gains for Blacks	Oct.	5
Black Youth		
Black Youth Face an Uncertain Jobs Future	Apr.	6
The Changing Black Family: Implications for Children	May	5
Minorities in Engineering: A Model for Success	Mar.	6
Drugs		
Confronting the Drug Problem: Two Opinions	June	5
The War on Drugs: Do We Have a Winning Strategy?	June	3
What Can Be Done About the Drug Problem?	June	2
Education		
Minorities in Engineering: A Model for Success	Mar.	6
Election '88		
And Now the Shouting: The Delegate Selection Process	May	TL 2
Are Republicans Really Seeking the Black Vote in '88?	June	TL 1
Bentsen and Quayle Voting Records: Where They Differ	Aug.	TL 2
Black Democrats' Expanding Participation in 1988	July	2
Black Discontent at the 1988 Democratic Convention	July	TL 1
Black Leadership Meeting in New Jersey	Aug.	8
Black VIPs at the 1988 Democratic Convention	Mar.	TL 3
Blacks and the 1988 Democratic National Convention	July	7
Blacks and the 1988 Elections: Critical Choices	Feb.	3
Blacks and the 1988 Republican National Convention	Aug.	7
Blacks in the Often Forgotten Legislative Races	Oct.	TL 2
But Can the Democrats Take the Black Vote for Granted?	June	TL 3
Election '88 Update: It's All Over But the Shouting!	May	TL 1
George Bush and a "Testy" Congress	Nov.-Dec.	TL 1
The Glow of the Rainbow	Apr.	4
A Growing Black Vote: Dr. King's Legacy	Jan.	2
Iowa and New Hampshire: At Last, Some 'Real' Voters	Feb.	TL 1
Jackson: First or Second in 27 States	Apr.	TL 2
The 1988 Election in Review	Nov.-Dec.	3
Not Voting: An Option Blacks Cannot Afford	Sept.	2
On the Presidential Campaign Trail . . .	Jan.	TL 1
On the Presidential Campaign Trail: The Republicans	Feb.	TL 2
One Last Look: Blacks and the '88 Presidential Race	Oct.	TL 1
The Other Black Presidential Candidate: Fulani's Quest	Mar.	TL 2
Record Number of Voting-Age Blacks in 1988	Feb.	TL 3
Scholarship, Research, and Black Political Empowerment	Apr.	2
Selecting a President in a Critical, But Complicated Election	Feb.	2
Super Tuesday and the Black Vote	Feb.	6
Tuesday, March 8, Was "Super" for Jesse Jackson	Mar.	TL 1
Voting Is an Exercise of Power	Oct.	2
Which Side Are You On: The Party Platforms	Sept.	TL 3
Women of Color Compete for Congressional Seats	July	TL 3
Employment		
Black Economic Progress: An Agenda for the 1990s	Sept.	5
Black Youth Face an Uncertain Jobs Future	Apr.	6
Minorities in Engineering: A Model for Success	Mar.	6
No Income Gains for Blacks	Oct.	5
Immigration		
Congress and Immigrants of the Future	Aug.	5
International Relations		
House Passes Tougher Sanctions Against South Africa	Aug.	TL 1
Japanese Racial Insensitivity—Again	July	TL 2
JCPS		
Black Economic Progress: An Agenda for the 1990s	Sept.	5
Black Leaders Gather at the Fifth National Policy Institute to Discuss Critical Policy Issues*	May	7
Blacks and the 1988 Democratic National Convention	July	7
Blacks and the 1988 Republican National Convention	Aug.	7
The Metropolitan Area Fact Book: A Statistical Portrait of Blacks and Whites in Urban America	Mar.	5
Scholarship, Research, and Black Political Empowerment	Apr.	2
Tom Bradley's Campaigns for Governor: The Dilemma of Race and Political Strategies	June	7
The Military		
After the Zero Option	Oct.	7
Focusing on Defense	May	2

	Month	Page
Truman and the Desegregation of the Military	May	3
Philanthropy		
Funding Candidates: Patterns of Political Giving	Aug.	3
A Tradition of Giving	Sept.	6
Race Relations, Civil Rights		
Civil Rights Restoration Act Finally Passes	Mar.	TL 3
Dr. Martin Luther King., Jr.: His Legacy Continues	Jan.	3
The Kerner Report: Twenty Years Later	Mar.	2
Looking Backward: The Kerner Commission Report Revisited	Apr.	TL 1
A New Civil Rights Agenda?	Nov.-Dec.	TL 4
On Black Initiative and Governmental Responsibility	Mar.	3
Scholarship, Research, and Black Political Empowerment	Apr.	2
The Supreme Court: Which Way on Civil Rights?	Oct.	3
Tom Bradley's Campaigns for Governor: The Dilemma of Race and Political Strategies	June	7
Truman and the Desegregation of the Military	May	3

	Month	Page
Socioeconomic Status		
Black Economic Progress: An Agenda for the 1990s	Sept.	5
The Changing Black Family: Implications for Children	May	5
A Child Care Agenda for the 1990s	Nov.-Dec.	5
The Forgotten Poor: Blacks in Rural Areas	July	5
The Kerner Report: Twenty Years Later	Mar.	2
The Metropolitan Area Fact Book: A Statistical Portrait of Blacks and Whites in Urbun America	Mar.	5
No Income Gains for Blacks	Oct.	5
On Black Initiative and Governmental Responsibility	Mar.	3
Welfare: Dependency vs. Reform	July	3
Tributes		
Dr. Martin Luther King., Jr.: His Legacy Continues	Jan.	3
Remembering a Man Called Moses	Aug.	2
A Salute to the CBC	Sept.	3
Voting Rights		
Taking History to Court	Jan.	4
Voting Rights: The Fight Moves North	Jan	6

Author Index

Author	*Article*	*Month*	*Page*
Allen, Joyce E.	The Forgotten Poor: Blacks in Rural Areas	July	5
Allen, Joyce E., and Margaret C. Simms	No Income Gains for Blacks	Oct.	5
Carson, Emmett D.	Funding Candidates: Patterns of Political Giving	Aug.	3
DeFrancis, Marc	*After the Zero Option*	Oct.	7
	Blacks and the 1988 Democratic National Convention	July	7
	Blacks and the 1988 Republican National Convention	Aug.	7
	Tom Bradley's Campaigns for Governor: The Dilemma of Race and Political Strategies	June	7
Dorn, Edwin	Truman and the Desegregation of the Military	May	3
Edelman, Marian Wright	A Child Care Agenda for the 1990s	Nov.-Dec.	5
Featherman, Sandra	Voting Rights: The Fight Moves North	Jan.	6
Lightman, Don	Minorities in Engineering: A Model for Success	Mar.	6
	The War on Drugs: Do We Have a Winning Strategy?	June	3
McCrary, Peyton	Taking History to Court	Jan.	4
McFate, Katherine	Welfare: Dependency vs. Reform	July	3
Morris, Milton D.	Blacks and the 1988 Elections: Critical Choices	Feb.	3
Norton, Eleanor Holmes	On Black Initiative and Governmental Responsibility	Mar.	3
Owens, Russell	Black Leaders Gather at the Fifth National Policy Institute to Discuss Critical Policy Issues*	May	7
Parker, Frank R.	The Supreme Court: Which Way On Civil Rights?	Oct.	3
Phillips, Olivia	Congress and Immigrants of the Future	Aug.	5
Schmoke, Kurt L., and Rangel, Charles B.	Confronting the Drug Problem: Two Opinions	June	5
Simms, Margaret C.	Black Youth Face an Uncertain Jobs Future	Apr.	6
	The Changing Black Family: Implications for Children	May	5
Toliver, Constance	*The Metropolitan Area Fact Book: A Statistical Portrait of Blacks and Whites in Urban America*	March	5
Williams, Eddie N.	Perspective**		
	Scholarship, Research, and Black Political Empowerment	Apr.	2
Williams, Linda F.	The Glow of the Rainbow	Apr.	4
	The 1988 Election in Review	Nov.-Dec.	3
	Political TrendLetter**		
	A Salute to the CBC	Sept.	3
	Super Tuesday and the Black Vote	Feb.	6
Williams, Wayne K., Jr.	A Tradition of Giving	Sept.	6
Witherspoon, Roger	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: His Legacy Continues	Jan.	3

*Conference Report **Monthly Column TL - TrendLetter

The 1988 Election in Review

(Continued from page 3)

Furthermore, Bush was strongly criticized by black leaders for conducting a racist campaign when Willie Horton, a black furlough escapee from Massachusetts, was made the subject of ads designed to attack Michael Dukakis by suggesting that his state's prison furlough program was irresponsible. This subtle linking of blacks with crime echoed the rhetoric of the Reagan administration which associated blacks with unpopular social programs. Early in Reagan's first term, officials of his administration frequently referred to blacks who abused the "wasteful" welfare system.

Finally, there are few indications that the black vote ever became a high priority for Bush's 1988 campaign. According to one staffer at the Republican National Committee, the Republicans spent less than $200,000 (including staff salaries) on outreach to blacks while they spent $4 million on outreach to Hispanics.

Future Political Options

One can conclude from the election results that the overwhelming majority of blacks are not ready to desert the Democratic party and join the GOP. For all the Democratic party's reputed shortcomings, the great majority of those blacks who did cast ballots voted Democratic, and they did so in roughly the same proportions as during the 1984 elections.

The pattern of racial and ethnic voting that has emerged from the 1988 contest indicates that the Democrats can put a president in the White House only if they can form a new strategy based on a more balanced multiracial coalition. A two-tiered strategy could be adopted, targeting states that fall into two different categories. The first category would encompass large non-Southern states where the mobilization of urban black voters would be pivotal, including California, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

States in the second category would be those outside the South where relatively few blacks live. Many of the states in this category have few electoral votes, but Dukakis either won or came close to winning in each of them. They include Pacific rim states Hawaii, Washington, and Oregon; Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, and Connecticut in the Northeast; and Iowa, South Dakota, New Mexico, and Montana in the West.

This would indeed be a new approach for the Democratic party, because it would mean capturing electoral votes in states where there are few blacks and casting black voters in a pivotal role outside the South.

From the GOP's standpoint, Republicans must assess the viability of the Reagan coalition which has brought together conservatives, blue collar workers, and right wing ideologues. The big question is: can the GOP continue to win elections with the coalition as it is presently constituted or must the coalition go through an overhaul? If the Republican party decides to bring more blacks into its ranks, it must make itself less odious to black Americans. In order to lessen black disaffection, Bush must set a new tone through his appointments, policies, and official pronouncements. He must show blacks that they will benefit from his administration and that they are welcome in the Republican party. ■

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